

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7404
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SAN SALVADOR 1345

STATE ALSO FOR LA/MRSD (GEORGE PHILLIPS)

GUATEMALA FOR ROCAP

RIO DE JANEIRO FOR MICHAEL HAMMER

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, ES
SUBJECT: AIFLD: HAMMER VISIT TO EL SALVADOR

REFS: (A) SAN SALVADOR 0862, (B) SAN SALVADOR 1014

SUMMARY. MICHAEL HAMMER OF AIFLD VISITED EL SALVADOR FROM FEBRUARY 20 TO MARCH 17. EMBOFFS ARRANGED AND ACCOMPAINED HAMMER TO NUMEROUS MEETINGS WITH HIGH GOES OFFICIALS TO DISCUSS AIFLD'S PROPOSALS FOR ASSISTANCE TO THE UCS AND THE POSSIBILITY OF REOPENING AN AIFLD OFFICE IN EL SALVADOR. DUE TO AN OSTENSIBLE LACK OF COORDINATION WITHIN THE GOES AND THE ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN LEADING UP THE MARCH 12 MUNICIPAL AND LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS, IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE FOR HAMMER TO GET A DEFINITE ANSWER FROM THE GOES ON THE REOPENING OF AN AIFLD OFFICE AND THE RESUMPTION OF AIFLD OPERATIONS IN EL SALVADOR. THE EMBASSY IS HOPEFUL
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OF GETTING A DEFINITE ANSWER ON THIS BEFORE APRIL 1.
END SUMMARY.

1. IN A VISIT TO EL SALVADOR FROM FEBRUARY 20 TOP MARCH 20, MICHAEL HANNER, DIRECTOR AOF AIFLD/BRAZIL, CALLED ON GOES OFFICIALS AND EMBASSY PERSONNEL TO EXPLAIN THE AUDS PORTION OF THE AIFLD PROGRAM PROPOSALS

FOR 1978-1979. WITHIN THE EMBASSY, HE MET WITH THE AMBASSADOR, DCM, POLITICAL OFFICER, AID DIRECTOR, PEACE CORPS DIRECTOR, AND POLITICAL/LABOR OFFICER. SOME OF THE RESULTS OF THESE MEETINGS HAVE ALREADY BEEN SET FORTH IN REF B. HAMMER EMPHASIZED THE NEED FOR THE REOPENING OF AN AIFLD OFFICE IN EL SALVADOR TO PROPERLY ADMINISTER AND MONITOR THE PROPOSALS EMBODIED IN THE AUDS PORTION OF THE 1978-1979 AIFLD PROGRAM PROPOSALS.

2. IN HIS MEETINGS WITH HAMMER, THE AMBASSADOR ACCEPTED THIS IDEAN UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS. HE PROPOSED THE NEGOTIATION AND SIGNING OF A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE EMBASSY AND AIFLD IN ORDER THAT THE "ERRORS OF THE PAST BE AVOIDED AND THAT THERE BE AN OPEN, HONEST, CLEAR UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN US AS TO THE CHARACTER AND PARAMETERS OF ANY RENEWED AIFLD PRESENCE." THE AMBASSADOR EMPHASIZED TO HAMMER THAT "THE CONCEPT OF FREE TRADE UNION ACTIVITY, ASSISTANCE TO RURAL WORKERS, AND THE BUILDING OF A DEMOCRATIC ENVIRONMENT FOR THE EXERCISES OF LEGITIMATE LABOR RIGHTS HAVE A HIGH PRIORITY" WITHIN THE EMBASSY AND THAT HE CONSIDERED THE REOPENING OF AN AIFLD OFFICE, UNDER APPROPRIATE CONDITIONS COULD CONTRIBUTE SIGNIFICANTLY TO THAT END.

3. THE EMBASSY SCHEDULED MEETINGS FOR HAMMER (ACCOMPANIED BY EMOFFS) WITH THE VICE-PRESIDENT (FEBRUARY 22), MINISTER OF LABOR (FEBRUARY 21, AND MARCH 14), MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (MARCH 2), AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE SUPREME COURT (MARCH 6). (THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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LATTER IS DR. ROGELIO CHAVEZ, WHO WAS MINISTER OF LABOR WHEN AIFLD LEFT EL SALVADOR IN 1973.) MEMCONS HAVE BEEN POUCHED ON THESE MEETINGS (SEE REF B CONCERNING CONVERSATION WITH THE VICE-PRESIDENT). AMBASSADOR AND DCM, IN CALLS ON THE VICE-PRESIDENT AFTER FEBRUARY 22, AGAIN CALLED HIS ATTENTION TO THE AIFLD PROPOSALS TO REOPEN AN OFFICE IN EL SALVADOR AND THE NEED FOR AN EARLY, DEFINITE GOES DECISION CONCERNING THIS MATTER. IN SPIRE OF INITIAL INDICATION HE WOULD BRING THE MATTER UP WITH THE PRESIDENT IMMEDIATELY, THE VICE-PRESIDENT'S SUBSEQUENT RESPONSE WAS THAT THIS MATTER WAS OUTSIDE HIS COMPETENCE AND MINLABOR WAS THE OFFICIAL INDICATED TO MAKE THE DECISION. EMOFFS ACCOMPANIED HAMMER ON ALL THESE CALLS AND SUPPORTED HIS PETITION FOR REOPENING THE AIFLD OFFICES MAINLY ON BASIS OF NEED TO CONTROL FUNDS ESPECIALLY AFTER EVENTS OF LAST YEAR WHICH RESULTED IN AN AID AND IAF AUDIT OF UCS ACCOUNTS.

4. IN ORDER TO TRY TO MEET THE PREVIOUS OBJECTIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF EL SALVADOR TO THE REESTABLISHMENT OF AN AIFLD OFFICE, HAMMER IN HIS VARIOUS CONVERSATIONS WITH GOES OFFICIALS PROPOSED: (1) TO APPOINT A NATIVE-BORN U.S. CITIZEN AS COUNTRY PROGRAM DIRECTOR (CPD) FOR ANY AIFLD OFFICE ESTABLISHED HERE; (2) TO ESTABLISH MORE OFFICIAL TIES BETWEEN SUCH

AN AIFLD OFFICE AND THE EMBASSY THAN HAD PREVIOUSLY EXISTED, WITH SUCH TIES TO BE FORMALIZED IN A "MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING" BETWEEN AIFLD AND THE EMBASSY; (3) TO RESTRICT ANY ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES ENGAGED IN BY THE AIFLD OFFICE TO THE UNION COMUNAL SALVADORENA (UCS), WITH ANY FUTURE EXTENSION OF ASSISTANCE BY THE AIFLD OFFICE TO URBAN LABOR UNIONS TO BE MADE ONLY AFTER CONSULTATIONS WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF EL SALVADOR AND THE U.S. EMBASSY; (4) TO ENSURE THAT ANY FUTURE AIFLD PROGRAM WITH THE UCS WILL BE A CONTRACTUAL ONE, WITH ANY EDUCATIONAL AND TECYNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS CONDUCTED BY AIFLD WITH THE UCS TO BE ON THE BASIS OF AN CONTRACT WITH THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (CEN) OF THE UCS, AND WITH THE CEN HAVING THE ULTIMATE AUTHORITY OVER SUCH PROGRAMS.

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5. NONE OF THE GOES OFFICIALS OBJECTED IN PRINCIPLE TO THE REOPENING OF AN AIFLD OFFICE AND THE RESUMPTION OF AIFLD OPERATIONS IN EL SALVADOR. HOWEVER, HIS CONVERSATION WITH HAMMER ON MARCH 14, MINLAOBR STATED THAT ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN LEADING UP TO MARCH 12 MUNICIPAL AND LEGISLATIVE ELCTIONS HAD CUT DEEPLY INTO HIS TIME AND THAT HE HAD NOT BEEN INFORMED BY OTHER GOES OFFICIALS WITH WHOM HAMMER MET THAT IT WAS BASICALLY UP TO HIM TO DECIDE ON QUESTION OF REOPENING OF AIFLD OFFICE IN EL SALVADOR. HE EMPHASIZED THAT HE WAS "PERSONALLY" IN FAVOR OF THE REOPENING OF THE AIFLD OFFICE BUT THAT HE WOULD HAVE TO MEET WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF GOES COMMISSION BEFORE HE COULD GIVE A DEFINITE ANSWER. HE SAID HE WULD TRY TO ARRANGE A MEETING OF THE COMMISSION BEFORE START OF HOLY WEEK (WHEN ALL GOVERNMENT OFFICES ARE CLOSED). HE CALLED LABOR OFFICER ON MARCH 16 AND SAID THAT IT WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE TO HAVE A MEETING OF COMMISSION UNTIL WEEK OF MARCH 26 BECAUSE OF VISIT OF MISSISSIPPI GOVERNOR FINCH (STARTING MARCH 16).

6. AT A SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT ON NIGHT OF MARCH 16, MINISTER SOUGHT OUT POLITICAL OFFICER AND APOLOGIZED PROFUSELY FOR NOT HAVING BEEN ABLE TO ARRANGE MEETING OF COMMISSION AND PROMISED THAT THERE WOULD BE A MEETING THE WEEK OF MARCH 26. HE REITERATED BEING PERSONALLY IN FAVOR OF AIFLD'S REENTRY. POLITICAL OFFICER SAID THAT HE WOULD CALL MINLABOR AFTER HOLY WEEK TO REMIND HIM OF HIS PROMISE.

7. EMBASSY WILL FOLLOW UP ENERGETICALLY ON HAMMER'S VISIT WITH A VIEW TO GETTING A DEFINITE ANSWER FROM THE GOES BEFORE APRIL 1 AS TO WHETHER OR NOT THEY WILL PERMIT THE RESSTABLISHMENT OF AN AFILD OFFICE. WE UNDERSTAND PAUL SOMOGYI, DIRECTOR OF AIFLD/GUATEMALA, WILL BE ARRIVING MARCH 28 FOR A SIX-WEEK STAY TO INITIATE THE PROGRAM ON "MANAGERIAL CAPABILITY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DEVELOPMENT" OUTLINED IN AUDS PROGRAM OF 1978-1979 AIFLD PROGRAM PROPOSALS.

8. COMMENT. HAMMER, ALONG WITH EMBOFFS, MADE DILIGENT EFFORTS TO OBTAIN GOES APPROVAL FOR REESTABLISHMENT OF AIFLD OFFICE. WHILE EMBASSY IS DISAPPOINTED AT LACK OF DEFINITE GOES ANSWER, IT REMAINS ONLY CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC THAT GOES WILL APPROVA AIFLD REQUEST, DUE TO MINLABOR'S STATEMENTS OF "PERSONALLY" FAVORING AIFLD'S REENTRY AND THE FACT THAT NONE OF GOES OFFICIALS WITH WHOM HAMMER MET OBJECTED IN PRINCIPLE TO AIFLD'S RE-ENTRY. NEVERTHELESS, GIVEN CONTINUING SUSPICION OF AIFLD (PERHAPS INDICATED BY THE VICE-PRESIDENT'S CHANGE TO A "HANDS-OFF" ATTITUDE) AMONG MANY IN THE GOES, ANSWER OF GOES COULD WELL BE A NEGATIVE ONE.
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